IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A continuous process for preparing sugar alcohols ~~by catalytic hydrogenation of~~ comprising catalytically hydrogenating an aqueous solution of a saccharide, ~~which forms~~ forming the corresponding sugar alcohol ~~on~~ by hydrogenation of the saccharide, in the presence of a ruthenium catalyst which is ~~obtainable~~ obtained by:

i) single or multiple treatment of an amorphous silicon-dioxide-based support material with a halogen-free aqueous solution of a low-molecular-weight ruthenium compound and subsequent drying of the treated support material at below 200°C,

ii) reducing the solid obtained in i) with hydrogen at from 100 to 350°C,

step ii) being carried out immediately after step i), which comprises, before the hydrogenation, bringing the aqueous saccharide solution to be hydrogenated into contact with the support material.

Claim 2 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the sugar alcohol prepared is sorbitol or xylitol.

Claim 3 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the aqueous saccharide solution is a wheat starch hydrolyzate or corn starch hydrolyzate.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the aqueous saccharide solution, before the hydrogenation, is forced through silica rods.